

REMARKS

ON AN

Historical PLAY,

Called, The *14 Mountfort (W.)*

FALL of Mortimer.

SHEWING

Wherein the said PLAY may be
term'd a Libel against the present
Administration.

————— *Had we but call'd*
King Robert to account for last Year's Work
With Sword in Hand, and reap'd the great Ad-
(vantage
O'er his Weakness, spite of the crafty King,
We had exacted golden Terms for England.
But now, forsooth, by Articles we're vanquish'd.
Fall of Mortimer.

THE SECOND EDITION.

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S Children and Servants of a Family have no other Business than to be subject and obey, it being the Province of the *Parents* and *Masters* to regulate the Affairs of the House ; so ought all *Subjects* to leave entirely to those entrusted with the Management of the Publick, the Care of it,

any farther than is ordain'd in our Liturgies, to implore the supreme Disposer of all Things so to influence the Minds of Persons in Authority, as may be consistent with the Glory of the King and Good of the Nation; it shews a turbulence of Nature, and an overweening Airrogance and Self-sufficiency, to carp or repine at the Actions of those above us; we are not to judge by Appearances: A wise Man profits by Adversity, and Afflictions are sometimes given us for our good. Great Men move in a superior Sphere, and tho' their Course may seem a little Irregular, we must not examine into the Cause of those extraordinary Changes, because we are not accountable for 'em, nor will all our Scrutiny avail to make a just Discovery. Thus some Animals look up with Pleasure at the Lustre of the Moon, while others houl at beholding it; yet still the beautiful Luminary rolls on serene and undisturb'd. If

If *Democritus* were now living, he would certainly laugh much more in reality than he is reported to have done, to see the Medley-Herd of *Politicians* that infest this Town : I never go into a Coffee-House without being tempted to become of the Sect of that *Philosopher* ; for what can be a greater Proof of Madness, than for People of all Conditions to be continually disputing about Matters, which perhaps are but ideal, or if they have any real Existence, can no Way be put a Stop to ? But I find the *English* Spirit is not quite sunk, tho', like other Volatiles, it changes Place ; it formerly rose dreadful, under Oppression, in the *Arms* of the aggriev'd ; it now shews itself in their Tongues ; and if we cannot *do* as much as our Predecessors, we certainly *talk* more.

But of all the various Ills complain'd of by our *Party-mongers*, I know of none more just than that of
the

the Gentlemen of *Parnassus*. True Poetry has indeed of late Years been generally discourag'd ; nothing will go down with those who call themselves the *Solid Part* of Mankind but *State-Pamphlets*, nor with the Gay, but *Ballad-Operas* ; and this depravity of Taste has unhappily drawn some young Authors, of otherwise very promising Genius's, to turn their Heads either to the one or the other of these Ways, so that 'tis highly probable, without the next Age should be no wiser, we who live in this will pass with them for Fools or Madman. But, however prejudicial this may be to our future Fame, I can much easier forgive him who soothes the Follies of the unhurtful Thoughtless, than him who flatters the Malice of the Disaffected. From these *sing-song* Farces which have attached so much Company, the Audience goes away no otherwise prejudic'd than by the
 Loss

Loss of so much Time as the Representation took up, but the Piece now performing at the Theatre in the *Hay-Market*, entitl'd, *The FALL of MORTIMER*, is of much worse Consequence ; there is a kind of Poyson in it, which enflames the Rancour of Mens Minds, and renders them every Time they see it less satisfy'd than before with their Condition. I shall now give proofs of what I have alledg'd, from the very Words of the Play, as I took 'em down in short Hand the 2d time of the Performance ; my surprize to find so general an Applause given to a Thing of that bare-fac'd, impudent Nature, preventing me from doing it at the first.

The drawing up the Curtain discovers *Mountacute*, *Delamore* and *Holland*, three Persons, whose Parts are illustrated with all the Pomp of Language, to render their Disaffection to the Administration more amicable

cable to the Spectators : After some Discourse on the Oppression of the People by *Mortimer*, and some other Minister, who one of them calls *his Brother Devil*, they proceed to speak of a Peace lately concluded, and *Mountacute* says,

— *Had we but call'd King Robert to account for last Year's Work with Sword in Hand, and reap'd the great Advantage o'er his Weakness, spite of the crafty King, we had exalted golden Terms for England. But now, forsooth, by Articles we're vanquish'd.*

The whole Scene is in much the same Strain ; but when *Mortimer* appears, and is knelt to by several *Petitioners*, he asks their Business, and is answer'd by *Nevill*, one of his Attendants, in these Words.

They are Inhabitants of adjacent Corporations ; they all of them have Voices at Elections, and promise for the Parliament to come, they will

will choose none but whom the Court shall like.

The Influence which that Bustle our Malecontents made concerning unfair Dealings at Elections, had on the Humours of the People, was very visible in the behaviour of the Audience when this was spoke; there being in the whole House, I believe, not one pair of Hands, except my own, that were idle on this occasion. But as if this was not sufficient to rouse the imaginary Notion of bribing Votes, which so much Pains has been taken to instil, *Mountacute* upbraids *Mortimer* in these Terms :

—*Nay, frown not Mortimer, thy Terror's lost on me. Look big upon those Bastard-Englishmen, who tamely yield their Rights and Charters up, and swear to pack a Parliament — who sell our Freedom, Persons, and Estates, nay Rights of Kings, to gain a short-liv'd smile —*

If the Reviver of this Play shou'd say in his Defence, that these Lines were in the original, I don't find any excuse he can make for bringing on the Stage, at so critical a Juncture as this is, a Piece which has lain dormant for upwards of forty Years. But we shall quit the serious Part for a-while, and proceed to the comic, which is entirely new. Several Citizens are discovered drinking in a Tavern, where, naturally enough, one seems to cavil at, another to approve the Peace, and a third who pretends not to be so great a Politician, asks how long they may suppose it will last; on which one of the other, whose Name I think is *Felt*, makes answer :

Ay, how long is it to last? There's the Query! I hate your Stop-gaps; they were never good for England. This putting off the Evil-day for a-while is but drinking of strong Liquors to keep up the Spirits, which
at

*at the long run are the Destruction
both of Body and Substance.*

Our Author soon after makes
them pretty much of a Mind, and
all dissatisfy'd ; the most moderate
of them however, sings this Song,
to the *Tune* of, *Over the Hills and
far away.*

*If Mortimer this Peace has made,
For sake of England, and of Trade ;
May his Enemies be few,
May his Friends be great and true.*

Which *Felt* seconds in these Lines :

*But if in mending of the State,
He has wrought with Tinkers Tools ;
May a Gibbet be his Fate,
Nor we longer be his Fools.*

After this, they grow scurrilously
severe on *Mortimer*, which, me-
thinks, is an ill Example. If *Prime
Ministers* are treated thus on the
Stage, to what Extremes will not
People go in private !

England is a fine Bird, and every one is for having a Feather of her.

On which *Bumper* answers,

Yes, and if some good Body does not stand her Friend, she will be plucked Bare, e're it be long.

It would be too tedious to enumerate all the wicked Reflections in this Scene, such as — *the French I suppose will have a pull at us next* — And here by the way, methinks the Author should be call'd to account for this ill-omen'd Expression; for my part, I cannot guess how he happened on it, unless he keeps a secret Correspondence with Somebody he should not; for I am certain the Intelligence of the *French* falling on our Ships did not arrive till after I heard it spoke upon the Stage. But what I look on as the most dangerous Hint of all is, that *Mortimer* takes care no Body shall have the King's Ear but himself: All good Kings are ever ready to
listen

listen to the Complaints of their Subjects; and the Figure that *Edward* the Third made afterward in History, leaves us no room to believe he was weak enough to be either awed or flattered into an entire Dependance on any one Minister; but our Author excuses him on account of his Youth, and wishes him better Counsellors. The Citizens at last are work'd up to such a height, on the decay of Trade, heavy Taxes, and other Grievances, that they resolve to Rebel, not against the King, but his Prime Minister *Mortimer*, which is the same thing; and go off singing in *Chorus* these Words:

*For why shou'd we sloop to King Bob,
Or be led by Mortimer's Crew;
A Halter wou'd finish the Job,
And make all our Enemies rue.*

Those numerous Reams of Paper
filled with railing and reproaches
which

which of late Years have been dispersed about this *Town*, have so much sour'd the Disposition of the greatest part of the *Populace*, that one can hardly find a Company of twenty where nineteen of them shall not tell you *England* never was in a worse Condition than now; that our Commerce abroad is very near ruin'd; our *Trade* at home decay'd; the Wealth of the Nation engrossed by particular *Persons*; *Taxes* upon the Commonalty weighty and oppressive, and a thousand such Aspersions, which there is not the least ground for; the Odium of all which pretended Hardships they cast on one Gentleman, who is so far from deserving it, that he has done more good in his *Generation* than ever any one Man did, or cou'd do before him, as it wou'd be very easy to make evident, even by the smallest Instances of his unparallel'd Generosity. Yet what will not Detraction say?

say ? His Enemies find the way to make his very Bounties criminal, by taxing them with Partiality or Corruption : But Posterity will doubtless do Justice to his Reputation ; in the mean time his own Works shall praise him in the Gates. A wise Poet will however beware of showing a *Prime Minister* in a disadvantageous Light. No *Mortimer's* should appear to give the disaffected room for Parallel ; he ought rather to search the Annals of Antiquity for a Favourite, whose only Ambition was to render his Master formidable abroad, and loved at home ; who had no Pride but in doing good ; who was covetous of Wealth no farther than it enabled him to purchase the Blessings of the Poor ; who look'd on every Subject of his King as a Branch of his own Family, and thought the Ties of Blood infinitely less binding than those of Virtue ; in a word, one
 who

who was not in appearance only, but in fact a Father of his Country, and like *Æmilius*, would have readily plung'd himself into the yawning Bowels of the Earth, to save the Publick from Calamity. How beneficial must be such a Character on the Stage! How wou'd it tune the Minds of the Audience, and compel even the most virulent of the factious Crew to own too much regard cou'd not be paid to such a Patriot! But in opposition to all this, the Play under our present Consideration discovers a *Prime Minister* in his most private Scenes of Life, giving and receiving Bribes for Ends the most pernicious to Liberty, selling the Glory of his King, and the Interest of his Country, and purchasing at any rate the Voices of a fordid pack, who give up All for gain. Who can behold such a Scene without Horror?

Nevil.

Nevil, *Imprimis, The Lord Viscount Landle's 400 Marks per Annum. Mortimer. Reduce it to Two hundred--- he's poor indeed, but 200 is enough in Conscience for a single Vote.* Nevil. *Lord Richacre, One thousand, and insists upon an Augmentation of 200.* Mortimer. *Let one be added, tho' he's of as little Service as my Lord Landle's, but he's Purse-proud, and may desert us,* Nevil. *Sir Oyly Fluent. 500.* Mortimer. *Oh, Two thousand's the least he can have--- he speaks like an Angel---, put him down 2000.* Nevil. *Sophister Topic, Esq; 1000.* Mortimer. *Make it up Fifteen hundred; for tho' the Man does not speak, he writes admirably! he dresses up Falshood within a Hair's-breadth of Truth: And if that does not do, he bullies them into Conviction.*

The Scene is much longer on the same Head, but this is enough to

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threw

shew how Bribery and Corruption prevail'd in those Days with both Lords and Commons; and how it was in the Power of one Man, by having the Treasure of the Nation in his Hands, to bring about whatever he pleas'd. An ill Precedent for future Ages, tho' there's no possibility of its being imitated in this.

In the fourth Act *Mountacute*, head of the Faction against *Mortimer*, having prepared the People for a Rising, describes their Readiness in these Words.

All join; the Nobles, Gentry and the Commons: The Chain is riveted; the wrosted People, whose Rights and Privileges are usurp'd, no longer free, but all in Vassalage, are ripe for Mischief, and now wait from us, the Signal when to dole the Act of Justice. Wou'd the Cry were up, that we might see these Manglers of the Realm drove to
the

the Shambles, and exposed as Beasts.

In the last Act, *Mortimer* is in some Apprehensions of falling, because of the universal Hatred he has drawn on himself from all sorts of People by his Actions, and resolves to stick at nothing to secure his Greatness, even tho' it shou'd be by the Murder of his King, and bewails the ill Circumstance of a Favourite once deprived of Power.

A decay'd Statesman is a wretched thing. 'Tis Flattery, and ill Actions which prefer us, and we have Flatterers too that thrive by us. Power makes us Knaves, we're honest out of Service, but when our Prince's Favour is withdrawn; nothing so despicable or unregarded.

*Therefore 'tis Policy when once we're in,
To finish by those Rules we did begin :
Then let the Factions 'gainst my Title roar;
I'll quickly quell Disputes when once I've Sovereign Pow'r.*

In this last Line is shown the true Spirit of Tyranny, therefore I say again, the Character is an ill Precedent ; for shou'd in any future Reign another *Mortimer* arise, entrusted as the former with the Strength and Riches of the Land, and be as ambitious also, who knows but he might contrive the Death of his Sovereign Liege, and when once possesst of the Crown, destroy indeed all Disputes concerning his Title to it.

Then, methinks, I wou'd fain know what he means by making one of the Mob in a succeeding Scene, say,

What! draw and put up again without doing any thing? No, thank ye for that: No Sham Fight:

It's very plain, our Author had an Eye either to the Expedition at *Spithead*, or the Sham Fight the Citizens sometimes make to show their Abilities in *Bunbills*; but

but which ever of these it were, the Innuendo is unpardonably insolent. But he goes on with worse still, as you shall be Judge.

Bumper. *You'll soon see this Castle, and its proud Master both in our Power.* 1st Mob. *Oh rare, there will be Plunder for ye my Boys.* Mob again. *Ay, then we shall plunder the Plunderer; and I'm sure there's no Harm in that.*

The Scene concludes with a confus'd Roar of Fight; Dye, Liberty. No *Mortimer*. As if it were an honest, or a Praise-worthy Action to rebel against a *Prime Minister*, be he never so bad. The King indeed may find fault, or when it suits his Pleasure, displace such an one, and for that Reason I cannot disapprove the latter End of young King *Edward's* Speech in this Play, however dangerous I may look on the other Parts to be; I think it was thus :

If

*If my good Commoners are kind and free,
 I'll lose my own, or fix their Liberty.
 Long have they born! Infringements on their Laws;
 A wicked, worthless Minister the Cause.
 His Views no farther than himself extend,
 And, center'd in himself, with his base Being end
 A King in Nobler Principles shou'd move:
 His Peoples Good he shou'd with Care improve,
 And leave his latest Heirs Rich in the Subjects
 Love.*

The two last Lines in the Prologue
 are as just as elegant.

*Our faithful Annals thus record to Fame,
 A Villain Statesman, not the King to blame.*

But there are several in the Epilogue which I cannot say the same of, particularly,

*Thought he, his glittering Ornaments would plead,
 And save the Danger of his Neck or Head?
 A Hempen Collar's always to be had,
 That makes no Difference 'twixt good Cloaths
 and bad.*

It happens a little unluckily, that History acquaints us, *Mortimer* was really hanged, else would such a Sentence on a *Prime Minister* been downright Treason even on the Stage; but I am no wrester of
 Peo-

Peoples Meanings ; I am willing to hope the Author had no ill Design, and that he had no other View in reviving this Play than meerly for the Profits that wou'd come to his Share in it, and therefore have made these Remarks chiefly to admonish him that he fish no more in troubled Waters, lest by exposing one *Prime Minister* he be thought an Enemy to all who who do, or shall hereafter bear that Character. But it contains four others which however I will do him the Justice to acknowledge, cannot possibly be construed into any malicious or ironical Meaning. They are these :

*Then as for Trade, the Losses we've sustain'd,
By glorious Stipulation are regain'd :
Without one Florin, or one Guinea paid,
On either Side the mutual League was made.*

A *Prime Minister* is a *Prime Minister* ; and there have been those who have suffer'd more for prying into *State Mysteries* than
Mr.

Mr. *W--- S---n* is likely to do for examining into those of the Holy *Trinity*, so terrible a Thing is it in this World, to offend worldly Power.

This Performance therefore, call'd the Fall of *Mortimer*, ought to meet with an universal Detestation, and tho' it be no more than the History of the Fall of one of the most wicked Tyrants and Betrayers of the *English* Constitution that perhaps any Age before him produc'd, yet as he was dignify'd with the Character of *Prime Minister*, a speedy Stop shou'd be put to its Progress, lest it shou'd occasion less Respect than begins already to be paid to so distinguish'd a *Title*.

F I N I S.

